

BG David P. Valcourt Becomes 35th Chief of FA

On 9 December 2003, Major General Michael D. Maples gave up the post of Chief of Field Artillery, Commandant of the Field Artillery School and Commanding General of the Field Artillery Center and Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to Brigadier General (Promotable) David P. Valcourt. General Valcourt came from Washington, DC, where he had been the Director of Strategy, Plans and Policy in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G3, at the Pentagon.

General Maples took command of Fort Sill on 23 August 2001 as the 43d Commandant of the FA School and 34th Chief of FA. Among other assignments, he commanded the 41st Field Artillery Brigade, V Corps, in Germany, and 6th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery (6-27 FA), 75th Field Artillery Brigade, in Operations Desert Shield and Storm. 6-27 FA was the only unit capable of firing the Army tactical missile system (ATACMS) in the Gulf War.

During his tenure as Chief of Field Artillery, the FA developed detailed "Fires and Effects" concepts for the Future Force, established requirements for the future indirect fires capabilities and the non-line-of-sight (NLOS) cannon, engaged in joint fires training and doctrine developments and supported FA units that performed magnificently in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Major General Maples is now the Vice Director of The Joint Staff at the Pentagon.



Brigadier General Valcourt is originally from Chicopee and his wife, Diane, is from Aldenville, both in Massachusetts. He is a 1973 graduate of the US Military Academy at West Point. Among his first assignments, he was a Forward Observer, Fire Direction Officer and Battery Executive Officer in 1-2 FA and then Target Analyst in the Division Artillery (Div Arty), all in the 8th Infantry Division (Mechanized) in Germany.

After graduating from the FA Officer's Advanced Course at Fort Sill, he became a Gunnery Instructor in the FA School. He credits the demands of teaching gunnery for more than two years with building his confidence and technical expertise to command his battery, B/2-37 FA, 212th Field Artillery Brigade, III Corps Artillery.

He also credits his tour as the Chief of the Advanced Fire Support Branch and, later, Chief of the Fire Support Doctrine Branch in the Fire Support and Combined Arms Operations Department (FSCAOD) of the FA School for preparing him to command his battalion in 1991. He was responsible for fire sup-

port instruction in the FA School and fire support lessons learned in the Combat Training Centers and determined that the Redleg's first contribution to the fight is as a joint fire supporter, then as an artilleryman.

General Valcourt served as the S3 of the 212th Field Artillery Brigade and then as G3 of III Corps Artillery before commanding 2-17 FA, also in the 212th Field Artillery Brigade.

During his command, 2-17 FA was the first unit equipped (FUE) with the M109A6 Paladin 155-mm self-propelled howitzer. His was the first battalion to take officers off the gun line and put NCOs in charge of the new guns that could operate semi-autonomously in dispersed operations. He gives great credit to his NCOs for the initial success of Paladin. He defined his job as certifying his NCOs on their weapons system, resourcing them to keep their Paladins mission capable and standing back and letting them do their jobs.

General Valcourt has been affiliated with the 17th FA Regiment since he came into the Army. His first exposure to the guns was as a West Point Cadet at Merrill Barracks in Grafenwoehr, Germany, where he pulled the lanyard on one of 3-17 FA's 8-inch howitzers, firing a nuclear spotting round at nearly full charge. Then as a Major, he was 2-17 FA's Executive Officer at Camp Pelham on the demilitarized zone in Korea.

From 1994 until 1996, General Valcourt was the Chief of the FA Branch at the Officer Personnel Management Directorate (OPMD) of the US Total Army Personnel Command (PERSCOM) in Alexandria, Virginia. Later, as a Brigadier General, he was the Director of OPMD.

He then commanded the 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized) Artillery, III Corps, at Fort Hood, Texas. General Valcourt, again, participated in another Army first—the digitization of the 4th Division. His Div Arty conducted digitized operations in the 4th Division Advanced Warfighting Experiment (DAWE) at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California, in November 1997.

General Valcourt next served as the the Operations Division Chief, J39, Information Operations, on The Joint Staff at the Pentagon. As a Brigadier General, he was the Assistant Division Commander (Maneuver) of the 2d Infantry Division in Korea.



Photos by Linda A. Young, Fort Sill TSC

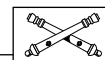
Among other schools, he attended the Naval War College at Newport, Rhode Island, and, in 2002, the British Higher Command and Staff Course at Shrivenham, England. He holds two master's degrees, including an MA in National Security and Strategic Studies from the Naval War College.

The Valcourts have three children: Danielle, married to Michael, an FA Captain soon to be Special Forces; Matt, a Computer Systems Operator 74B20; and Michelle, a high school freshman.

At all Fort Sill ceremonies, including the 9 December change of command, it is a tradition for the historic Half Section to fly the guidon of the first command of the Commanding General. The Half Section had flown the guidon of Major General Maples' first command, B/6-37 FA, 2d Infantry Division, for the past two years.

When the General Valcourt took command, the Half Section took down the guidon and presented it to Major General Maples, who, in turn, presented it to First Sergeant (Retired) Leon D. Parton,

his First Sergeant during his battery command. Similarly, Command Sergeant Major (Retired) Cornell Gaines, who was Brigadier General Valcourt's First Sergeant in his first command, B/2-37 FA, presented the battery's guidon to General Valcourt to pass to the Half Section. The Half Section will display General Valcourt's guidon at all the ceremonial events in which it participates.



Redlegs on the Cover of *Time*— "Person of the Year"

Congratulations to three Field Artillery Soldiers from the Survey Platoon, Headquarters Battery, 2d Battalion, 3d Field Artillery, 1st Armored Division, in Iraq for being Redleg heroes and representing the "Person of the Year, The American Soldier," on the 29 December 2003 *Time* magazine cover. The three All American Soldiers honored are Specialist Billie Grimes, 26, a Medic from Lebanon, Indiana; Sergeant Marquette Whiteside, 24, a Gunner from Pine Bluff, Arkansas; and Sergeant Ronald Buxton, 32, the A Team Leader, from Lake Ozark, Missouri. According to Managing Editor James Kelly, *Time* chose them "to stand for all of those in a US uniform who go in harm's way": Soldiers, Marines, Airmen and Sailors.

After arriving in Baghdad in late May, about one month after President George W. Bush declared an end to major combat operations in Iraq, the Survey Platoon drew responsibility for one of the toughest, most volatile neighborhoods. The platoon was nicknamed the "Tomb Raiders" after its successful mission to search cemeteries for hidden caches of enemy weapons.

Time reporters Romesh Ratnesar and Michael Weisskopf, along with photographer James Nachtwey, ate, slept and went on patrol with the Tomb Raiders and, in their article "Portrait of a Platoon," told the story of "how a dozen soldiers—overworked, under fire, nervous, proud—chase insurgents and try to stay alive in one of Baghdad's nastiest districts."

In fact, on 10 December 2003, Michael Weisskopf lost his hand while on patrol with the Tomb Raiders in a high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle (HMMWV). He had tried to throw out a grenade lobbed by an insurgent into his HMMWV when it went off. His hand cupped around the grenade and the shielding of a bench in the HMMWV probably saved lives. Jim Nachtwey was hit by shrapnel in the abdomen below his armored vest. Private Orion Jenks, 22, on B Team, from Modesto, California, suffered a broken leg while Private First Class Jim Beverly, 19, the Driver/Grenadier/Assistant Gunner, from Akron, Ohio, lost teeth and had his tongue lacerated. Specialist Grimes from the next HMMWV treated the injured immediately. (All are doing well, including Michael Weisskopf, who is at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC.)

Other Redleg heroes of the Tomb Raiders are First Lieutenant Brady Van Engelen, 24, Platoon Leader from Twin Falls, Idaho; Sergeant David Kamount, 34, Position and Azimuth Determining System (PADS) Team Chief from Biloxi, Mississippi; Staff Sergeant Abe Winston, 42, Platoon Sergeant/B Team Leader from West Virginia; Specialist Sky Schermerhorn, 29, Driver/Grenadier from Fresno, California; Specialist Bernard Talimeliyor, 34, Driver/Grenadier/Assistant Gunner from Colonia, Yap, Micronesia; Private Lequine Arnold, 20, Gunner from Goldsboro, North Carolina; and Sergeant Jose Cesar Aparicio, 31, Psychological Operations NCO from Los Angeles, California.

For more information, see the article "Portrait of a Platoon" in the 29 December edition of *Time* online at <http://www.time.com/time/personoftheyear/2003/poyplatoon.html>.

